



HEALTH RISKS AMONG RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 1997 YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY

*RI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
RI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH*

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This summary presents selected information on health risks among Rhode Island high school students, based on data from Rhode Island's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in each of 46 participating states and territories nationwide. It was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with state and local departments of education and other federal agencies. The YRBS monitors health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

The 84-item multiple choice YRBS was administered to 1,528 randomly selected Rhode Island public high school students (grades 9 through 12) during the spring of 1997. The response rate was 60.0%. Results of the survey are representative of all Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12, and can be used to make important inferences concerning their health-risk behaviors.

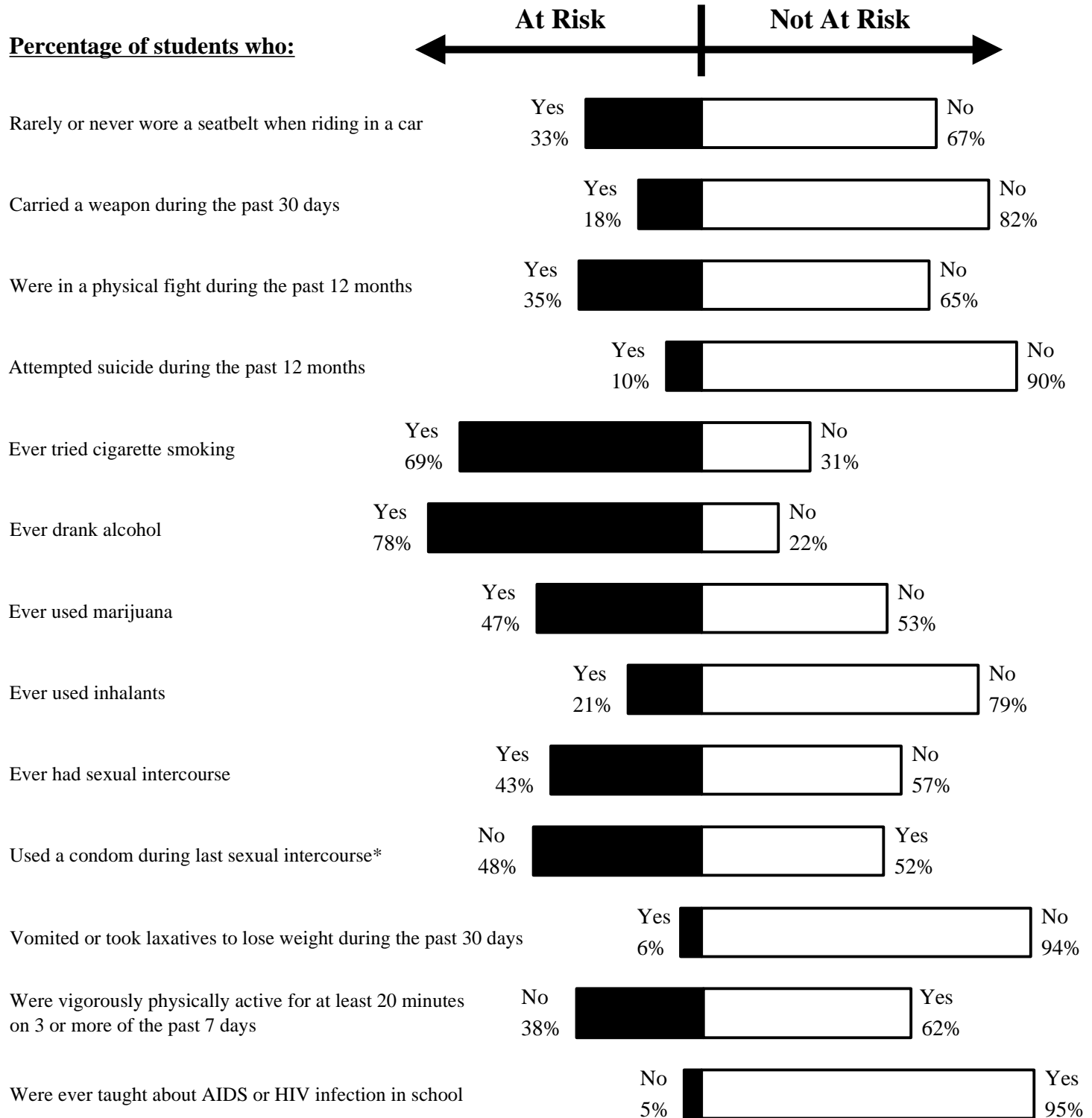
For additional information or a more detailed report contact Cynthia Corbridge, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2106 or Jana Hesser, Ph.D., Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-2550.

K *KEY FINDINGS*

- ✓ Regular physical activity has multiple immediate and long-term health benefits. Lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. 1997 YRBS results indicate that 62% of Rhode Island students participated in vigorous physical activity for at least 20 minutes, 3 or more times in the week preceding the survey. Only 45% of Rhode Island adults are physically active 20 minutes or more on 3 or more days each week.
- ✓ Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 24. 1997 YRBS results indicate that 24% of Rhode Island students seriously considered attempting suicide and 10% attempted suicide in the 12 months preceding the survey (Figure 1). These percentages are similar to national YRBS results for 1995 (24% and 9% respectively).
- ✓ Alcohol is a major contributing factor in approximately half of all homicides, suicides, and motor vehicle crash fatalities. These are the leading causes of death and disability among young people. 1997 YRBS results indicate that 78% of Rhode Island students have had one or more drinks of alcohol during their lifetime (Figure 1), similar to 1995 national YRBS results of 80%. Further, 52% of Rhode Island students had had one or more drinks of alcohol in the 30 days preceding the survey. This means that about 21,128 public high school students illegally used alcohol in the month prior to the survey.
- ✓ Seat belt use can reduce motor vehicle fatalities by between 40% and 50% and serious injuries by between 45% and 55%. Increasing the use of vehicle safety belt use to 85% could save an estimated 10,000 American lives per year. 1997 YRBS data indicate that 33% of Rhode Island students rarely or never wear a safety belt when riding in a vehicle driven by someone else (Figure 1), and that only 24% always wear a safety-belt. Rhode Island's rate of safety-belt non-use is higher than the rate reported on the national YRBS (22%).

Figure 1

Health Risks Among Rhode Island High School Students, Grades 9 - 12, 1997



* Of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 12 months.

Source: 1997 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=1528)

Figure 2

Health Risks Among Rhode Island High School Students Occurring on School Property, 1997

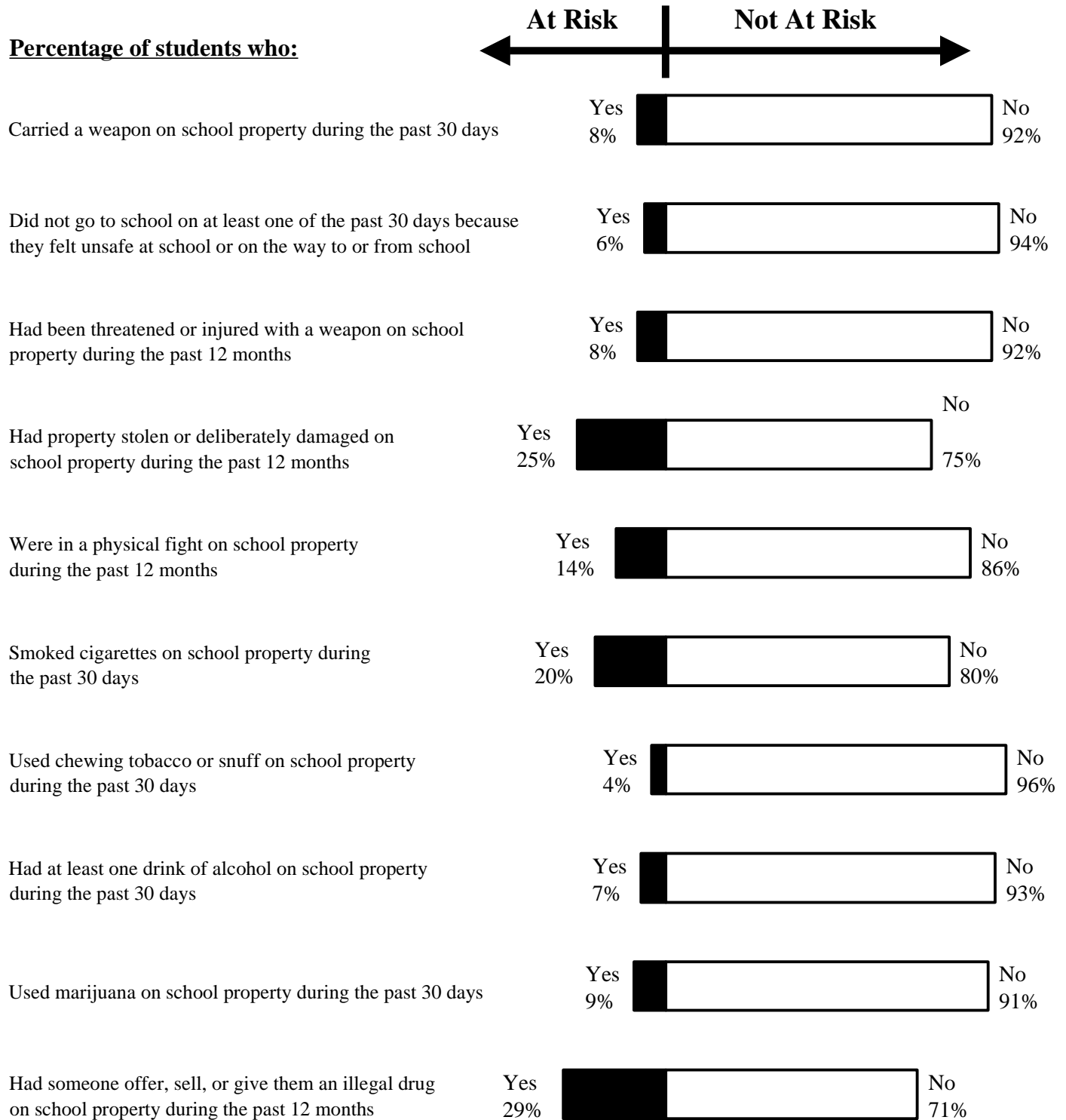


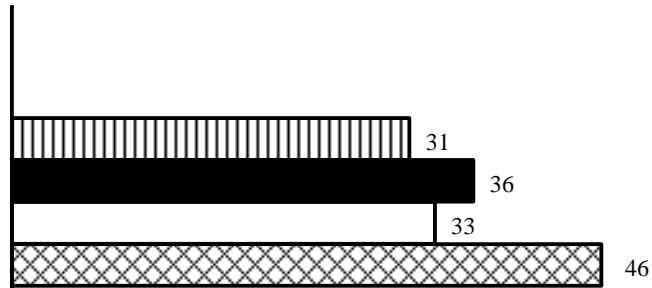
Figure 3

Health Risks Among Rhode Island High School Students by Grade, 1997

Percent of students who:

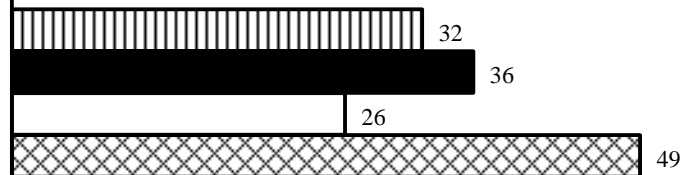
Risk Behavior: Unintentional and intentional injuries

Rode in a vehicle during the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol



Risk Behavior: Tobacco Use

Smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days



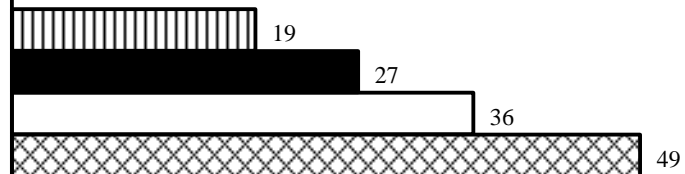
Risk Behavior: Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Had a drink of alcohol during the past 30 days



Risk Behavior: Sexual behaviors that result in HIV, STDs, and unintentional pregnancy

Had sexual intercourse during the past 30 days



Risk Behavior: Dietary patterns that contribute to disease

Ate french fries or potato chips one or more times yesterday



Risk Behavior: Insufficient physical activity

Did exercises to stretch or tone their muscles 3 or more of the past 7 days

